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Original Article

Short-form Video Use and Sustained Attention: A Narrative Review (2019–2025)

Keith Robert Head
Independent LMSW
School of Nursing and Health Sciences, Capella University, MN, USA

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Abstract: *The explosive growth of TikTok and short-form media has revolutionized the social media habits of Gen Z and Millennials, leading to concerns about attention span in these user demographics. This narrative review covers literature published between 2019 and 2025, investigates the association between short-form video use and perception. Studies have shown that heavy use of TikTok and similar short-form media is associated with shorter attention spans, poorer academic performance and abnormal white matter in the brain linked to behavioral control, raising questions about excessive use and addiction. Young users seemingly of all ages, including perhaps in particular younger ones, may be especially susceptible to attention impairment as their brains continue to develop. Although current research methods have their limitations, the evidence suggests that frequent short-video use is associated with poorer cognitive functioning. Intervention in the form of education and clinical management is advocated for these areas and the need born from increased risk-taking behavior requiring further longitudinal investigations, research investigating long term consequences.*

Keywords: *adolescent cognitive development, digital attention deficit, short-form video content, social media consumption, screen time.*

I. INTRODUCTION

TikTok emerged as the fastest-growing social media platform among adolescents and young adults in the United States beginning in 2019, fundamentally transforming digital media consumption patterns through its distinctive short-form video format. The platform delivers rapid sequences of 15 to 60-second videos through an algorithm-driven autoplay interface, exposing users to continuous streams of novel content with minimal user initiation required for transitions between videos. The platform has been credited with popularizing a new form of social media, short-form videos. By January 2024, the United States alone had nearly 150 million monthly active TikTok users, with usage especially high among young people. Recent estimates indicate that around 62–85% of Americans aged 18–29 use TikTok regularly making it one of the most popular apps for Generation Z (Gottfried, 2024). This widespread adoption has generated growing concern about the platform's possible effects on cognitive development, in particular, the ability of young users to sustain attention. Many observers worry that exposure to short-form media such as TikTok's endless stream of bite-sized videos may be "killing" attention spans, a phenomenon colloquially dubbed "TikTok Brain". Reports from educators and parents describe teens struggling to focus in class or during prolonged tasks, behavior changes often attributed to constant stimulation from social media scrolling (Crispo, 2024). These concerns align with a broader context of research linking digital media multitasking to reduced attention and increased distractibility. Given TikTok's distinctive format, an algorithm-driven feed of ultra-brief videos designed to maximize engagement, it is critical to understand whether and how this platform specifically impacts attention span in young users.

Attention span, defined as the capacity to maintain concentrated focus on a stimulus or task over time without distraction, represents a fundamental cognitive ability critical for academic achievement, occupational success, and daily functioning. Developmental neuroscience research has established that executive attention systems, including networks responsible for sustained attention and cognitive control, undergo substantial maturation throughout adolescence and young adulthood, making youth populations potentially vulnerable to environmental influences that might disrupt typical developmental trajectories. Traditional concerns about media effects on attention have focused on television viewing and general screen time, but TikTok's unique characteristics present novel considerations. he platform's algorithm-curated content creates highly personalized feeds designed to maximize engagement through continuous novelty, immediate gratification cycles, and rapid context switching between unrelated content pieces (Kim, 2024).

Early commentary and theoretical work suggest that short-form media such as TikTok's design offering quick rewards and novel stimuli with each 15–60 second video, could condition the brain to seek constant stimulation, potentially diminishing tolerance for sustained focus on less instantly gratifying tasks. On the other hand, proponents note that TikTok might have educational or creative merits, and that brief attentional engagement is not inherently negative if balanced with other activities. Until recently, however, empirical evidence on these issues was extremely limited. This review aims to fill that gap by investigating the current body of research (2019–2025) on short form use and attention span. We focus primarily on TikTok (and other analogous short-video apps and media forms) to isolate the effects of this platform, excluding studies on general screen time or other social media unless short-form media specific data are provided. Key questions addressed include: what measurable effects does short-form media use have on users' attention (behaviorally and neurologically)? How does short-form media use relate to academic or daily functioning in terms of concentration? Are certain groups (e.g. heavy users or younger adolescents) more affected? And what mechanisms might explain any observed relationships. By synthesizing findings across studies, we seek to identify common patterns and discrepancies, as well as to highlight gaps in knowledge. In doing so, this review will contribute to a better understanding of "TikTok and attention span" beyond the headlines. Ultimately, clarifying these relationships can inform educators, parents, clinicians, and policymakers as they grapple with balancing TikTok's popularity and potential benefits against its risks to cognitive health.

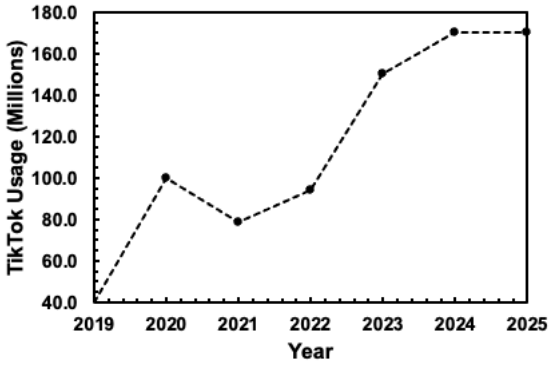

Figure 1: TikTok Usage in the U.S.

II. METHODS

We conducted a comprehensive literature search to identify empirical studies that examine TikTok use in relation to attention span or attentional outcomes. Given the interdisciplinary nature of this topic, multiple academic databases were used, including but not limited to PsycINFO, PubMed, ERIC, EBSCOhost, ResearchGate, Academia, and Google Scholar. Search terms combined keywords for the platform (e.g. "TikTok", "short-form video", "short video app", "Reels," "Shorts," "short video," and "short-form") with terms for attention outcomes (e.g. "attention span", "sustained attention", "focus", "concentration", "attention deficit"). We also manually screened reference lists of relevant papers and recent review articles on social media and cognition for additional sources. Our primary search timeframe spanned 2019-2025, focusing on English-language publications, though we included earlier works or research outside the United States if they contributed substantially to the topics being investigated. While prioritizing peer-reviewed sources, we also considered preprints and grey literature from reputable repositories based on methodological rigor and direct relevance. Both quantitative and qualitative study designs were considered, but quantitative, empirical studies were prioritized, especially those measuring attention-related variables.

From our comprehensive search, our search initially identified 81 candidate publications. After removing duplicates and screening titles/abstracts for relevance, 32 sources remained for full-text review. Of these, we excluded those that did not meet the above criteria upon closer reading (for example, studies of "social media use" that did not isolate TikTok effects, or clinical commentaries without research data). The final review synthesis is based on 14 key studies and reports that directly examine TikTok or short-form video use in relation to attention outcomes. These include cross-sectional survey studies, correlational studies with psychometric scales, experimental or quasi-experimental studies (e.g. cognitive testing before/after short-form media exposure), and neuropsychological research. We excluded studies that did not isolate short-form video effects, editorials, and reports without primary data. We extracted details on study design, sample characteristics, relevant measures of attention, key results, and authors' interpretations. Given the heterogeneity of methods, a formal meta-analysis was not feasible; instead, we employ a narrative synthesis, grouping findings by common themes.

In analysis, we evaluated the strength of evidence for short-form media's impact on attention span by looking for convergent findings across independent studies and noting any inconsistencies. Where available, effect sizes or statistical significance of associations between short-form media's use and attention metrics are reported. We also considered methodological quality (e.g. sample size, use of objective attention measures vs. self-report, control of confounding variables) to contextualize confidence in each study's conclusions. This analysis revealed three primary themes that structure our review: (1) reduction in attention capacity and sustained focus, (2) impact on academic performance and learning outcomes, and (3) neurobiological impact and dopamine system alterations. As this study relied exclusively on publicly available secondary sources without direct human subject involvement, IRB review was not required nor sought. In discussing results, we integrate evidence to address the review questions, and in the discussion section we explore underlying mechanisms, practical implications, and directions for future research.

III. ANALYSIS

Across literature, short-form media usage of apps such as TikTok among youth and young adults is characterized by high frequency and duration of engagement. Survey data confirm that teens and young adults often spend substantial time on apps such as TikTok daily. While exact estimates vary, TikTok users average between 59 to 95 minutes per day on the app, translating to hundreds of individual video clips viewed in a single day (Galanis et al., 2024; von Fedak & Langlais, 2024). This intensive use provides numerous opportunities for rapid shifting of attention from one piece of content to the next. Such usage patterns have led mental health experts and educators to suspect a link to attention difficulties. Even before formal studies emerged, pediatric clinicians described TikTok as a "dopamine machine" that trains kids to seek instant gratification, raising red flags about their ability to tolerate tasks lacking TikTok's quick rewards (Burhan & Moradzadeh, 2020).

Limited empirical research since 2019 has begun to substantiate these concerns. In both self-report surveys and more objective assessments, heavy TikTok users consistently show signs of shortened attention span compared to lighter users or non-users. It is important to note that "attention span" can be operationalized in different ways. Some studies rely on subjective reports, such as users rating their own ability to concentrate or teachers reporting student behavior, whereas others employ behavioral tests of sustained attention. Despite this variability, the overall pattern of results points in the same direction: greater TikTok use is associated with poorer sustained attention along with adverse academic performance and behavioral Outcomes.

A. Reduction in Attention Capacity

While research on attention capacity remains limited, some evidence have emerged showing a negative correlation between the amount of TikTok and short-form video use and self-rated attention capabilities. One study by Alghamdi and Aljabr (2024) surveyed over 200 young adult TikTok users (average age ~23, many of whom were working professionals) to examine effects on cognitive function. They found that time spent on TikTok was significantly associated with decreased attention span, based on participants' self-reported ability to stay focused. Users who spent more hours per day on TikTok or who reported a stronger emotional attachment to TikTok had notably worse attention scores. This study provides empirical evidence that suggests both the quantity of TikTok exposure and the psychological dependence on the app relate to attention impairments in daily life.

Similarly, among adolescent and college-aged populations, heavy short-form video and TikTok use has been linked to complaints of concentration difficulty. In a study by Haliti-Sylaj and Alisa Sadiku (2024) involving 150 college students, those who frequently watched short video "reels" (including on TikTok) reported a significantly reduced ability to sustain attention compared to those with more moderate use. This attention decrement was not just a subjective impression, it correlated with tangible outcomes like struggling to stay engaged and focused. In another self-reported study of 1,047 Chinese college students, researchers examined the relationship between short-form video addiction and procrastination. The study found that short-form video addiction both directly increased procrastination and indirectly affected it by impairing attentional control, with the effect of video addiction on attentional control being weaker among students with higher boredom proneness (Xie et al., 2023). In another study of 44 Chinese university aged participants using both self-report measures and eye-tracking technology, researchers found that those addicted to short-form videos showed impaired attention during and after video viewing. Compared to non-addicted students, addicted users exhibited more fixation counts with shorter durations while watching videos and performed worse on subsequent attention tasks, suggesting that short-form video addiction impairs both sustained attention and the ability to concentrate when processing information.(Chen et al., 2022). Another study of 1086 Chinese adolescent students found that short video usage intensity was positively associated with short video addiction , "TikTok brain" (perceived mood enhancement), and decreased attention control (Ye et al., 2025).

While limited research is available, this early evidence suggests that TikTok and other short-form video platforms may negatively impact attention span. Particularly concerning is that individuals predisposed to addiction experience significantly worse outcomes. Interestingly, those with higher boredom proneness appear to be somewhat protected from the attention-impairing effects of video addiction, possibly because they are less likely to become fully absorbed in the repetitive content. Further research is needed to understand the long-term cognitive effects of short-form video consumption, establish causal relationships rather than correlations, and determine whether these attention deficits persist after reducing or stopping usage.

B. Impact on Academic Performance

Academic performance perhaps represents the most thoroughly documented outcome of short-form video consumption. Several studies have explored whether TikTok or short-form media use correlates with students' academic engagement and performance, given that sustaining attention is key to learning. The findings consistently show that excessive TikTok use is associated with poorer academic outcomes, and this seems to be mediated at least in part by reduced attention span and procrastination.

The study of undergraduates by Haliti-Sylaj and Sadiku (2024) noted earlier, demonstrated that short-form video consumption also significantly impaired academic performance in addition to attention span among undergraduate students. heir study found that students who spent more time watching reels had notably lower GPAs, with reel consumption accounting for 25% of the variance in academic performance. Even after controlling for other factors like study habits and time spent on coursework, heavy reel consumption remained a significant predictor of poorer academic outcomes, suggesting that the fragmented nature of short-form content may interfere with the sustained focus necessary for academic success. The authors concluded that the highly engaging but rapid content of TikTok and similar platforms "significantly impairs academic performance", likely by interfering with students' ability to focus during lectures and study sessions. This is echoed by the research by Xie et al. (2023) finding that short-form video addiction significantly increased academic procrastination and led students to delay assignments and struggle with timely completion of academic tasks, both directly and indirectly through impaired attentional control, likely compromising their overall academic achievement.

Beyond self-report studies, Asif and Kazi (2024) found a negative correlation between hours spent on short videos and academic achievement in a sample of secondary school students. In their mixed-method study, quantitative data showed that students with more daily TikTok viewing time tended to have lower exam scores. Qualitative interviews with a subset of heavy users (4+ hours on TikTok per day) provided context for these findings. These students admitted to attention difficulties and struggled to concentrate on homework, frequently interrupted study sessions to check TikTok, and generally found long reading assignments "boring" compared to the quick dopamine hits of online videos. In a recent systematic review of problematic TikTok use, researchers also found that young users with higher TikTok addiction scores were more likely to report academic difficulties and attention problems as consequences of their usage (Jain et al., 2025).

Taken together, the evidence suggests that high-frequency TikTok use may undermine academic performance by shortening the duration for which students can effectively concentrate on academic tasks. As focus wanes, so does comprehension and retention, leading to poorer grades over time. Beyond attention deficits, TikTok use also appears to fuel procrastination behaviors. Students not only experience reduced quality of study due to distraction and shortened attention spans, but they may also spend less time studying overall, as they delay academic work in favor of scrolling through videos. This dual impact of diminished focus when studying and increased avoidance of academic tasks likely amplifies the harm to students' academic performance. It is worth noting that not all findings are uniformly negative when it comes to educational contexts. Aziz and Dali (2023) examined TikTok's use in a learning environment and found that short video content, when integrated into lessons appropriately, short-form media increased student engagement and could even aid memory for certain topics.

C. Neurobiological Impact

Beyond behaviors, short-form media including TikTok has been theorized to have significant neurobiological impacts on brain structure and function. Early research suggests that short-form media consumption may influence the brain's dopamine reward circuitry through mechanisms that parallel substance addiction pathways (Zhang & Li, 2025). It provides rapid, repetitive bursts of rewarding stimuli that strongly engage the brain's dopamine-driven reward system. Each quick video delivers immediate gratification, triggering the release of dopamine in the brain's reward pathways and reinforcing a cycle of expectation and reward. Over time, this pattern of frequent dopamine spikes conditions the brain to seek constant novelty and instant feedback, a mechanism analogous to gambling-like intermittent rewards. This hyperactivation reflects the exploitation of the mesolimbic dopamine pathway, wherein rapid content switching on

platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels triggers repeated dopamine release creating powerful reinforcement loops (De et al., 2025). This neuropsychological pattern, characterized by impulsivity, preference for novelty, low tolerance for delayed gratification, and difficulty maintaining attention, has been colloquially termed “TikTok brain” in reference to its prevalence among heavy TikTok users.

Emerging neuroimaging and neurophysiological studies have begun to document associations between heavy engagement and differences in brain structure and function. For instance, Yan et al. (2024) found that individuals with high short-video use tendencies showed significantly lower markers of prefrontal executive function (e.g., reduced midfrontal theta power on EEG), alongside poorer self-control abilities. Complementary evidence comes from MRI research by Gao et al. (2025) reported that compulsive short-video users exhibit increased gray matter volume in key reward-related regions, as well as heightened neural activity in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, posterior cingulate cortex, temporal pole, and cerebellum. The observed changes, including orbitofrontal cortex enlargement and prefrontal hyperactivation, likely reflect adaptations in dopamine-sensitive reward circuitry induced by repeated short-video stimulation. Such neurobiological alterations may underlie the behavioral changes, including attention deficits and learning impairments, reported in excessive short-form media users, as the brain's reward pathways become tuned to constant stimulation at the expense of sustained cognitive effort. Supporting these neurobiological theories, the previously noted study of 1086 Chinese adolescents found that heavy short video usage correlated with increased reliance on videos for mood enhancement (measured as "TikTok brain"), which in turn was associated with both addiction symptoms and decreased attention control, providing behavioral evidence consistent with the proposed dopaminergic mechanisms (Ye et al., 2025).

While preliminary evidence suggests neurobiological impacts from short-form media consumption, it is important to recognize that this research field remains in its infancy with significant gaps requiring investigation. Documented studies consist primarily of small-scale cross-sectional studies with limited sample sizes. Although these early findings indicate potential alterations in dopamine reward circuitry and prefrontal executive function, longitudinal research tracking neural changes over time is notably absent, preventing definitive conclusions about whether observed differences represent adaptations to media use or preexisting vulnerabilities that predispose certain individuals to excessive consumption. Further research is needed to understand the long-term neurobiological impacts of short-form media consumption, clarify underlying mechanisms, determine to what extent, if any, whether these brain changes are reversible when usage is reduced or discontinued.

IV. DISCUSSION

Multiple contemporary studies demonstrate consistent patterns suggesting that short-form media's rapid succession of brief video clips undermines viewers' capacity to maintain prolonged focus, with research repeatedly showing how TikTok's accelerated presentation of compact content disrupts users' ability to sustain concentration over time. Those who are high-frequency short-form media consumers show clear patterns of reduced ability to maintain focus, whether measured through self-assessments, behavioral performance, or even neural activity.

A. Synthesis of Findings

The collective findings from recent literature provide converging evidence that TikTok and similar short-form video platforms present significant challenges to sustained attention among young users. The evidence reveals a consistent pattern across multiple domains of cognitive and academic functioning. Heavy TikTok users demonstrate reduced attention capacity through both subjective self-assessments and objective behavioral measures, with studies reporting that users averaging more than two hours daily on the platform show measurable attention deficits compared to moderate users or non-users. This relationship appears dose-dependent, with attention impairments becoming more pronounced as daily usage increases. The academic implications are particularly concerning, as students with high TikTok consumption show not only reduced GPAs but also increased procrastination behaviors and diminished ability to engage with complex academic materials. These behavioral changes appear to have neurobiological correlates, with preliminary neuroimaging studies indicating alterations in prefrontal executive function and reward-related brain regions among heavy users. The consistency of these findings across different methodologies, populations, and cultural contexts strengthens confidence in the relationship between short-form video consumption and attention difficulties.

B. Mechanisms

Several interconnected mechanisms appear to drive the observed relationship between TikTok and short-form media use and diminished attention span. The primary mechanism involves the platform's exploitation of dopaminergic reward pathways through intermittent reinforcement schedules. Each video transition delivers a small dopamine release, creating a powerful reinforcement loop that conditions users to seek constant novelty and immediate gratification. This

neurobiological conditioning progressively reduces tolerance for sustained engagement with less immediately rewarding activities. The algorithmic curation of content amplifies this effect by continuously optimizing for maximum engagement, creating a personalized stream of highly stimulating content that becomes increasingly difficult to disengage from. Additionally, the rapid context switching between unrelated content pieces appears to fragment cognitive processing, preventing the deep engagement necessary for sustained attention. Users become habituated to processing information in brief, disconnected bursts rather than maintaining focus on coherent narratives or complex concepts. This cognitive fragmentation may explain why heavy users report difficulty with extended reading assignments or lengthy academic lectures. The constant availability of the platform through mobile devices creates an additional layer of attentional disruption, as users develop habitual checking behaviours that interrupt focused work sessions and prevent the establishment of deep concentration states.

C. Developmental Vulnerability

The Neurobiological impact brings up concerns of the long-term impact of short-form media including TikTok on children and young adults with developing brains. With youth and young adults' consumption is occurring during critical developmental periods when executive attention systems are still maturing. Adolescents and young adults, whose prefrontal cortices continue developing into their mid-twenties, may be especially vulnerable to the attention-fragmenting effects of short-form media. The platform's design elements appear to exploit this developmental vulnerability, likely disrupting typical trajectories of attentional development. However, the research also reveals important individual differences in susceptibility. Users with pre-existing tendencies toward addiction show stronger associations between TikTok use and attention deficits. Conversely, individuals with robust self-regulatory capacities or those who maintain diverse leisure activities appear somewhat protected from the most severe attention impacts. These individual differences suggest that universal recommendations regarding TikTok use may be less effective than targeted interventions based on individual risk profiles. Understanding these vulnerability factors becomes important for identifying which users are most at risk for developing significant attention difficulties and tailoring prevention strategies accordingly.

D. Academic Implications

The documented impacts on academic performance raise fundamental questions about educational practices in an era of growing short-form media. Traditional pedagogical approaches that rely on sustained attention to lengthy lectures or extended reading assignments may become increasingly misaligned with the cognitive habits developed through platforms like TikTok. Educators report growing challenges maintaining student engagement, with many describing a noticeable decline in students' ability to focus on complex material without frequent breaks or stimulation changes. This presents educators with a difficult dilemma regarding whether to adapt teaching methods to accommodate shortened attention spans or to actively work to rebuild students' capacity for sustained focus. Some institutions have begun experimenting with micro-learning approaches that break content into smaller, more digestible segments, though this risks further reinforcing the fragmented attention patterns associated with TikTok use. Alternative approaches focus on explicitly teaching attention management skills and implementing technology-free periods during the school day. The evidence suggests that academic institutions need to develop comprehensive strategies that both acknowledge the reality of changed attention patterns while working to preserve and rebuild capacities for deep, sustained engagement with complex material.

E. Clinical and Mental Health Considerations

The attention deficits associated with heavy TikTok use raise important clinical considerations for mental health professionals. The symptom profile observed in heavy users shares notable similarities with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, including difficulty sustaining focus, increased distractibility, and challenges with task completion. This overlap creates diagnostic challenges, as clinicians must differentiate between technology-induced attention difficulties and underlying neurodevelopmental conditions. The evidence for neurobiological changes in reward circuitry also suggests potential connections to addictive behaviors, with some users displaying tolerance, withdrawal-like symptoms when unable to access the platform and continued use despite negative consequences. Mental health professionals increasingly encounter clients whose TikTok and short-form media use interferes with academic, occupational, or social functioning, necessitating the development of specialized assessment and intervention protocols. Treatment approaches may need to address both the behavioral patterns of excessive use and the underlying attention deficits that persist even after usage reduction. The reversibility of these attention impacts remains an open question, though preliminary evidence suggests that structured digital detox periods combined with attention training exercises may help restore some attentional capacity.

F. Limitations

While the emerging evidence provides important insights into TikTok and short-form media's impact on attention, several methodological limitations must be acknowledged. First, the research base remains in its infancy with remarkably

few empirical studies conducted to date, particularly within the United States. The predominance of cross-sectional and correlational designs prevents definitive causal conclusions about whether use directly causes attention deficits or whether individuals with preexisting attention difficulties are simply more drawn to the platform. The absence of longitudinal studies tracking attention changes over time represents a critical gap in the literature. Most studies rely heavily on self-report measures of both short-form media use and attention difficulties, introducing potential biases related to social desirability and self-awareness. The few studies employing objective attention measures have used varied assessment tools, making direct comparisons across studies challenging. Additionally, most research has focused on relatively homogeneous samples of students or young adults, limiting generalizability to other age groups or populations. The rapid evolution of the platform itself presents another challenge, as features and algorithms continuously change, potentially altering the cognitive impacts over time. Cultural factors may also moderate the relationship between TikTok use and attention, though most research has emerged from Western or East Asian contexts, leaving gaps in understanding global impacts.

G. Directions for Future Research

Addressing current knowledge gaps requires a comprehensive research agenda employing diverse methodological approaches. Longitudinal studies tracking users over months or years would clarify whether observed attention deficits represent temporary adaptations or more persistent cognitive changes. Experimental designs manipulating TikTok exposure under controlled conditions could establish causal relationships while controlling for confounding variables. Neuroimaging studies with larger samples and standardized protocols would advance understanding of the neurobiological mechanisms underlying attention changes. Research should also investigate potential protective factors and resilience mechanisms that might buffer against negative attention impacts. Intervention studies testing various strategies for managing TikTok use while preserving attention capacity could inform evidence-based guidelines for users, parents, and educators. Additionally, comparative research examining different short-form video types and approaches would clarify whether observed effects are specific to TikTok or represent a broader phenomenon of short-form media consumption. Additionally, research should explore potential positive applications of short-form video for education or skill development, identifying contexts where brief, engaging content might enhance rather than impair learning.

V. CONCLUSION

The converging evidence across behavioral, academic, and neurobiological domains suggests that heavy TikTok and short-form video consumption correlates with measurable attention deficits, academic underperformance, and neurobiological alterations in users. These findings extend beyond isolated symptoms to show a pattern where platforms exploit developmental vulnerabilities through dopaminergic reward mechanisms, creating users who increasingly require constant stimulation while losing capacity for sustained cognitive engagement. The documented academic consequences, including lower GPAs, increased procrastination, and inability to engage with complex materials, suggest manifestations of deeper cognitive changes that could influence developmental trajectories, although further longitudinal research is needed. Individual differences in susceptibility, particularly among those with addiction tendencies versus those with higher boredom proneness, suggest that universal approaches to managing these platforms may be less effective than targeted interventions based on risk profiles.

The consequences of short form media consumption and declining attention spans require careful consideration by educators, mental health professionals, and families navigating an increasingly fragmented digital world. Educational institutions face the problem of whether to adapt pedagogical approaches to accommodate shortened attention spans or actively work to rebuild students' capacity for sustained focus through attention management training and technology-free periods. Mental health professionals must develop assessment protocols distinguishing between technology-induced attention difficulties and underlying neurodevelopmental conditions, while addressing the addiction-like patterns some users display. As these platforms continue evolving to maximize engagement, the evidence suggests we are witnessing not merely a temporary cultural shift but potentially lasting alterations to cognitive functioning during critical developmental windows. The question remains whether the creative and social benefits of these platforms justify the mounting cognitive costs to a generation whose ability to sustain attention may determine their capacity to navigate an increasingly complex world.

Interest Conflicts

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest concerning the publishing of this paper.

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